

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of the claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

Claims 1-37 (Canceled)

38. (Currently Amended) A method for cooling cheese blocks comprising:
placing a plurality of cheese blocks sequentially into different sections of a tank,
wherein the sections are arranged horizontally with respect to each other and contain
cheese blocks that have been in the tank for different amounts of time; and
while cheese blocks are confined within each section of the tank, flowing liquid
through the tank from a section that contains cheese blocks that have been in the tank
substantially the greatest amount of time toward a section that contains cheese blocks that
have been in the tank substantially the least amount of time.

39. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 38 wherein placing
a plurality of cheese blocks sequentially into different sections of a tank comprises
sequentially directing cheese blocks from an inlet flume into each section ~~one of a plurality~~
~~cooling cells~~, wherein the cheese blocks in each section ~~cooling cell~~ at a given point in time
have been in the tank different amounts of time than the cheese blocks in other sections
~~cooling cells~~.

40. (Currently Amended) The method as recited in claim 39 wherein flowing liquid through the tank comprises:

introducing chilled liquid into a given section ~~cooling cell~~ that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for substantially the greatest amount of time;

transferring liquid from the given section ~~cooling cell~~ into the ~~cooling cell~~ section that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for the next greatest amount of time; and

~~continuing to transfer liquid successively between each additional pair of cooling cells, wherein the liquid is transferred into one cell of the pair that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for a lesser amount of time than the other section cell of the pair~~

continuing to transfer liquid sequentially into other sections of the tank, by successively transferring the liquid from a section by that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for a lesser amount of time than a section which receives the liquid.

41. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 38 further comprising removing liquid from the section containing cheese blocks that have been in the tank substantially the least amount of time.

42. (Currently Amended) A method for cooling cheese blocks in a tank that is divided by walls into a plurality of cooling cells arranged horizontally, said method comprising:

placing a plurality of cheese blocks into different ones of the plurality of cooling cells, wherein the plurality of cooling cells contain cheese blocks at different temperatures;

introducing a liquid into a selected one of the plurality of cooling cells; and

transferring the liquid from the selected one of the plurality of cooling cells to another cooling cell and then sequentially from cooling cell to cooling cell, wherein each transfer is from a cooling cell containing cheese blocks that are colder than cheese blocks in a cooling cell into which the liquid is entering.

43. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 42 wherein introducing a liquid introduces the liquid into the cooling cell that contains cheese blocks having the lowest temperature.

Cancel claim 44.

45. (Previously Presented) The method as recited in claim 42 further comprising chilling the liquid prior to introduction into the tank.

Cancel Claims 46-49.

50. (New) The method as recited in claim 38 wherein the different sections are formed by dividing the tank with walls into a plurality of cooling cells.

51. (New) The method as recited in claim 38 further comprising entirely submerging at least some of the cheese blocks in each section of the tank.

52. (New) The method as recited in claim 42 further comprising entirely submerging at least some of the cheese blocks in each cooling cell of the tank.

53. (New) A method for cooling cheese blocks comprising:
placing a plurality of cheese blocks sequentially into different sections of a tank,
wherein the sections are arranged horizontally with respect to each other and contain
cheese blocks that have been in the tank for different amounts of time;
entirely submerging at least some of the cheese blocks in each section of a tank; and
while cheese blocks are submerged within each section of the tank, flowing liquid
through the tank from a section that contains cheese blocks that have been in the tank
substantially the greatest amount of time toward a section that contains cheese blocks that
have been in the tank substantially the least amount of time.

54. (New) The method as recited in claim 53 wherein flowing liquid through the tank comprises:

introducing chilled liquid into a given section that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for substantially the greatest amount of time;

transferring liquid from the given section into the section that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for the next greatest amount of time; and

continuing to transfer liquid sequentially into other sections of the tank, by successively transferring the liquid from a section by that contains cheese blocks which have been in the tank for a lesser amount of time than a section which receives the liquid.

55. (New) The method as recited in claim 53 wherein the different sections are formed by dividing the tank with walls into a plurality of cooling cells.